



Effects of Alcohol and Other Drugs on Job Performance and Family

FACT SHEET

Some people think about their use of alcohol or other drugs, but they are not convinced they have a problem. Other people are secretly concerned, but they minimize the extent of the problem by blaming other people or circumstances. Still others realize they have a problem—perhaps family members or employers have told them that they “need some help”—but they aren’t sure how serious it is or what help is available.

This fact sheet presents some of the possible effects of alcohol and other drug use. It presents them by phases of use—early, middle, late middle, and late phases¹—and it emphasizes the visible signs in general behavior and job performance for each phase. The fact sheet does not, however, provide a way for you to diagnose whether you have an alcohol or drug problem, or the seriousness of a problem. You should not assume a diagnosis of alcoholism or other addiction, even if you are experiencing some of the visible signs and symptoms² listed below.

The struggle for answers about alcohol and drug problems can be difficult. Without expert assessment and diagnosis, it can entail an exhausting search without easy resolution. But confidential diagnosis and assistance can be helpful at any point along the continuum, and it is better to seek and get such help sooner rather than later.

Early Phase	Middle Phase	Late Middle Phase	Late Phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Use to relieve tension-Tolerance increases-Don't feel like yourself-Have memory blackouts-Lie about use <p>Visible signs</p> <p><i>General behavior:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Overreact to real or imagined criticism-Complain of not feeling well-Lie about use-Family and coworkers complain about you <p><i>Job performance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Miss deadlines-Arrive late-Leave job early-Often absent from work-Make mistakes because of inattention or poor judgment-Experience decreased efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Sneak drinks or drugs-Feel guilty about using the substance-Experience tremors when not using-Experience general loss of interest <p>Visible signs</p> <p><i>General behavior:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Family, coworkers, supervisors, friends not able to depend on your word-Begin to avoid associates-Borrow money from coworkers-Exaggerate work accomplishments-Need to go to hospital more than average-Have repeated minor injuries on and off the job-Feel unreasonable resentment <p><i>Job performance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Take frequent days off for vague ailments-Work deteriorates-Experience irregular work pace-Find it difficult to concentrate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Avoid discussion of problems-Fail in efforts at control-Experience a lack of appetite-Prefer to use alone <p>Visible signs</p> <p><i>General behavior:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-With some substances, such as alcohol, can become grandiose, aggressive, or belligerent-Relationship issues interfere with work-Have an apparent loss of ethical values-Experience loss of money-Hospitalization increases-Have trouble with the law <p><i>Job performance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Perform below expected level-Take frequent time off, sometimes for several days-Fail to return from lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Believe that other activities interfere with drinking or other substance use <p>Visible signs</p> <p><i>General behavior:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Use on the job-Become totally undependable.-Have repeated hospitalizations.-Show visible physical deterioration-Financial problems worsen-Have serious family problems or divorce <p><i>Job performance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Have prolonged and unpredictable absences-Work is very uneven-Become generally incompetent



If you recognize yourself in any of these indicators, perhaps it is time to get help.

There are confidential ways to determine if you need help and, if so, where to get it. See the fact sheet Workplace Substance Abuse Prevention Resources Reference List and the brochure Using Your Employee Assistance Program (both in this book).

References

¹ The following effects on job and family were adapted from the U.S. Department of Labor. See <http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/drugs/workingpartners/materials/symptoms.asp/>.

² In general, the mood effects of many drugs fall into two categories. Some drugs are downers; they make people feel tired, listless, dull, uninterested in things, or quite depressed. Many others are stimulants; they make people anxious, jittery, unable to sleep, panicky, or fearful. This fact sheet is intended as an overview.